

BASIC RAT RIDING:  
A FLEA'S GUIDE TO SURVIVAL ON THE HOST\*

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For an ectoparasite, survival is often equated with its ability to remain on a suitable host. Three basic ways of remaining on the host have been recognized, each with its own set of morphological and biological adaptations: (1) running rapidly through the feathers or fur of the host; (2) hanging onto the host so tightly that it cannot be removed; and (3) hiding in a place where the host cannot afford to get at the parasite. Examples of all three methods will be discussed and illustrated with slides of bird and rodent ectoparasites from Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.